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ABSTRACT

Dominant conceptions of race, racism, and antiracism are becoming increasingly untenable. Based on research inside multiethnic schools, this paper explores the possibilities for a new, critical, and grounded approach to antiracism. It combines new research findings on antiracist practice in English secondary schools and a critical review of recent developments in the theorizing of contemporary subject identities. The paper concludes by outlining an approach ("critical antiracism") that addresses directly the lived experiences of teachers and students while recognizing the dynamic and contingent nature of racism. Critical antiracism acknowledges the complexity of contemporary identity politics and builds on original case study research in schools that have moved beyond rhetoric, to address antiracism as a central and crucial part of the lives of students and teachers. Of particular importance is the role students themselves play in encouraging a more rigorous and workable approach to antiracism. Included is a figure that provides a brief chronology of racial violence against children and youth in England. (Contains 54 references.) (Author/SLD)

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racism, modernity and schooling:
new directions in antiracist theory and practice

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First draft - comments welcome

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Dominant conceptions of race, racism and antiracism are becoming increasingly untenable - based on research inside multiethnic schools, this paper explores the possibilities for a new, critical and grounded approach to antiracism. It combines new research findings, on antiracist practice in English secondary schools, and a critical review of recent developments in the theorizing of contemporary subject identities. The paper concludes by outlining an approach (*'critical antiracism'*) that addresses directly the lived experiences of teachers and students while recognizing the dynamic and contingent nature of racism.

INTRODUCTION

In the United Kingdom a distinction is often drawn between 'multiculturalism' and 'antiracism'. The former is usually associated with a concern to develop more culturally diverse and sensitive curricula, while the latter stresses the need to confront inequalities in power, to identify and deconstruct the racist structures that shape students' lives. Limited (and largely tokenistic) forms of multiculturalism have been embraced by the liberal establishment and surface occasionally in Government rhetoric. Antiracism, on the other hand, has never been nationally recognized - it has been most influential at the level of the local state, in individual schools and school districts. Although based on emancipatory ideals, however, some antiracist practice has come to be characterised by a set of assumptions that owe more to polemic than to grounded experience or social theory. In this paper I examine antiracism critically, from both theoretical and practical perspectives. I argue that traditional forms of antiracism are poorly equipped for a world where ethnic identities are increasingly complex, dynamic and sometimes contradictory. My aim is not to reject antiracism, but rather to help refocus it by suggesting ways forward which pull together new insights about the nature of race and racism as they are experienced, recreated and modified at the school level. In particular, I build on qualitative research in schools that have moved beyond rhetoric, to establish antiracism as a real and important part of the lives of students and teachers. Before considering recent theoretical work on the nature of race and identity, it is useful to begin by looking at students' perspectives on these matters.

LIVING THE CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPLEXITY:
student experiences and perspectives

Robina:

> if people are racist ... that person is isolated. You know, even their *own* friends will isolate that person...

Nina:

> It is just immediate isolation. Within that minute, that is it. Everyone is against that person; whether they are new, whether they are the most popular person, headgirl, deputy, *anything* - that is it.

Robina and Nina are South Asian young women, Pakistani/Muslim and Punjabi/Sikh respectively. They are in their penultimate year of compulsory schooling in Mary Seacole Comprehensive; an LEA maintained girls' school where just under half the students have family origins in Pakistan and northern India. Seacole is one of two schools that I studied as part of a two year project on antiracist change and practice[1]; the school has an impressive recent history of antiracist work, which has both

strengthened, and benefited from, the antiracist sentiments of many of the students. As the quotation above indicates, racism is treated especially harshly within the student subculture of the school. Nevertheless, playful racist name-calling, between friends of minority ethnic background, is common:

Robina:

> ... if a black girl calls another black girl racist names, they won't take it seriously because they find it funny. It is like, if Nina called me a 'Paki' I wouldn't really be bothered. I have got to admit, I do it myself to my other friends and we enjoy it, you know, calling each other 'Pakis' and everything. <she laughs>

Moira: (white)

> But if *I* said that, then it would be totally different wouldn't it.

Although Robina is almost confessional in admitting that she swaps fake racist insults with her friends, there is no sense in which such jokes undermine the students' opposition to racism: Moira (a white friend) makes sure I have understood the point by emphasizing that such games are not available to her. The students take-for-granted that what really matters is not whether a particular term is used, but how, by whom and in what circumstances. In this way, they tacitly recognize that race, ethnicity and racism are complex ideas whose meaning and significance are not fixed.

The same students criticize a teacher whom they perceive as repeating Islamaphobic sentiments:

Nina:

> ... in history, Miss Slater - we are doing about terrorism at the moment, round the world - and she wanted to assassinate Colonel Gaddafi. She said, 'Lets pick someone who we would like to kill' ... Then she said Saddam Hussein ...

Robina:

> It makes you feel funny because they are both Muslim. And it makes you feel like she has got something against Muslims...

Nina:

> She said, 'Is anyone offended by that?' And we said, 'Yes'...

Here the students choose to highlight the multi-ethnic composition of the class, drawing particular attention to the presence of Muslims and questioning 'commonsense' Western notions of Middle-East tyranny and oppression. In this case the students foreground their ethnic identity and challenge a teacher's apparent assumption that everyone shares the same perspective on certain events. And yet the same students are also vocal in their criticism of another teacher who not only recognizes the group's diversity but seeks to highlight it and use it as a resource in his teaching:

Nina:

> There is this girl, Jaswinder, she is a Sikh, and they were doing about Sikhism and [a teacher] asked *her* questions straight away ... And she goes, 'How am I meant to know, even if I am a Sikh? How have I got to know?' ...

Robina:

> He assumed all - like, 'How many prophets have you got?' *It's like if you don't name them all you are not a Muslim!*

There is no contradiction here: the students are not seeking to deny ethnic diversity in one context and highlight it in another. Rather, in *both* situations they are objecting to the teachers' failure to question common racist stereotypes; the first by accepting a one-sided vision of barbaric Middle-Eastern politics, and the second by assuming that (unlike Christians) minority students have a uniform and exceptionally deep (fundamentalist) knowledge of their religion - the students are rejecting the Orientalism they see figured in the actions of some teachers. This is not to say, of course, that minority students have any kind of perfect vision when it comes to breaking down essentialist notions of difference and Otherness. For example, both Robina and Nina were surprised by the vehement reaction of some Muslim peers when Robina successfully sought to extend the school's practical recognition of Islam:

Robina:

> It was the Holy Month and I said - 'cause we pray five times a day - I said, 'Are we allowed to pray in school Miss?' And [the headteacher] said that was a good idea. So we have booked a room, me and another girl, and we invited girls. We got a good response first, about twenty people. It's not *very* good, but that is a *good* response. And then after that it broke down and now nobody comes at all. <she laughs>

Nina:

> And there was this Muslim girl and she just *laughed* at Robina and said, 'Gosh, you're *stupid* doing this'. And it is her *own* religion as well.

Robina:

> We had a few Muslim girls coming and saying <angrily> *'What do you think you're doing?'* Because to them religion is left at home, they don't want to bring it to school. For them school is a *social* occasion... For *them* school is a time of letting go of home life...

Contrary to the popular stereotype of South Asian young women as silent, passive and practically invisible in classroom situations (Brah, 1992; Brah and Minhas, 1985), Robina and Nina are vocal, active and sometimes oppositional as they negotiate the demands of their schooling: they have strong ideas about the importance of ethnicity and religion; they experience racism and understand something of its different forms. However, these same students also exemplify the complex and contingent character of contemporary ethnic identities: they mobilize against racism from peers, yet engage in playful racist name-calling between friends; they are sensitive to any action which seems to essentialize them as ethnic subjects yet actively highlight their independence from white/commonsense assumptions and perspectives.

These brief extracts highlight something of the complex and dynamic character of ethnicity in contemporary schools and classrooms. It is a situation that students experience, recreate and modify day-by-day, lesson-by-lesson, minute-by-minute. It is a reality that must be addressed if schools are seriously to challenge the racism that pervades so much of the education system and the world beyond the school gates. Unfortunately, some existing forms of antiracism have proven inadequate for the task.

ANTIRACISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

Municipal & symbolic, moral antiracism

Often defined in opposition to earlier 'multicultural' perspectives, antiracism typically stresses the importance of going beyond additive curricular approaches, to engage in direct action against racism, making connections with community perspectives and challenging schools to break the cycle of inequality they are currently implicated in reproducing (see Brandt, 1986; Mullard, 1984; Troyna, 1992). Although antiracism has never been accorded central government support, during the 1980s several LEAs, and many individual schools, made public commitments to antiracism. The Greater London Council (GLC) and Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) were especially prominent in their public support for antiracist policies and initiatives. These bodies assumed folk devil status among many on the political right, culminating in their abolition by a Conservative central government led by Margaret Thatcher. However, the GLC's antiracist campaigns and strategy have also drawn criticism from the left and from academics intent on challenging the current iniquitous status quo. Paul Gilroy (1987; 1990) and Tariq Modood (1992) have been among the most important critics, drawing attention to problems inherent in the key assumptions embodied in 'municipal' antiracism (Gilroy, 1987). They argue that much antiracism (or at least its most public form) trades on dangerously simplistic ideas about race, culture and racism which provide easy slogans but, given the increasingly complex dynamics of identity and race politics, may actually make effective action against racism more difficult[2]. In the field of education, parallel arguments have been made against a form of 'symbolic, moral and doctrinaire anti-racism' (Macdonald *et al*, 1989). The latter criticisms arose from an independent inquiry into racism and racial violence in Manchester schools, in particular, focusing on a racist murder at Burnage High School, Manchester.

The 'Burnage report', as it became known, was authored by Ian Macdonald, Reena Bhavnani, Lily Khan and Gus John - four people with strong track records in opposing racism. The report was very clear in its support for antiracism, as a crucial part of any education, but highly critical of the particular form of antiracism practised at Burnage (see Macdonald *et al*, 1989, pp. xvii-xxv). Its conclusions were widely misrepresented in the popular press and, partially as a result of this, the report continues to be misunderstood and passed over by many practitioners and academics alike. Nevertheless, the report's attack on 'symbolic, moral and doctrinaire anti-racism' offers an important reminder that, whatever its intent, even the most self-consciously libertarian and anti-oppressive initiative must be subjected to critical scrutiny. In particular, the report highlights the dangers of adopting essentialist and reductive approaches to race and ethnicity, which deny the complexity of people's (teachers, students, parents) lived experiences. The Burnage authors identify the following as defining characteristics of symbolic, moral antiracism:

* *an essentialist and reductive approach to race*
  Colour is assumed to be the most important feature of a person and/or community. Matters of colour and race override all other issues, including social class, gender, age, size, etc.

* *an assumption of white racism*
  Racism is defined as a 'whites only' issue - explicitly including only actions by whites against people of minority ethnic background[3]. Additionally, there is an assertion that all whites are implicated in racism and racist structures, such that any white role in anti-oppressive struggles is severely constrained.

* *a black/white worldview*
  The world is defined in terms of black and white: Blacks are cast as powerless victims and differences within and between minority communities are denied relevance.

Macdonald, Bhavnani, Khan and John emphasize the need for antiracism to deal with the complex realities of the school and classroom, not simply impose a preordained idea of how things are and what must be done. They argue that too often previous attempts to oppose racism have suffered from a tendency to place race in a vacuum - removed from other factors and viewed in isolation from wider, more complex webs of human interaction. Antiracists - in their real and legitimate determination not to be diverted, nor to have racism swamped by other issues - have sometimes fallen into the trap of divorcing racism 'from the more complex reality of human relations in the classroom, playground and community' (Macdonald *et al*, 1989, p. 347). In practice this approach has come to embody a black/white worldview - a 'racial dualism' (Modood, 1989) - that denies relevance to differences between and within minority communities (including gender and social class differences) and constructs an image of whites as uniformly powerful and racist. The Burnage report draws attention to the consequences of this position, as effectively removing whites from the antiracist struggle. Macdonald and his colleagues argue that this position threatens continually to place antiracism at the margins of education policy, as a blacks-only/cities-only issue. Contrary to its professed goals, such an approach encourages polarization around racial identities that are taken to be fixed and obvious:

> [symbolic, moral and doctrinaire anti-racism] has reinforced the guilt of many well-meaning whites and paralysed them when any issue of race arises ... It has taught others to bury their racism without in any way changing their attitude. It has created resentment and anger and topped free discussion. It encourages the aspiring black middle class to play the 'skin game' and for a few 'liberal anti-racist' whites to collude in it ... The fundamental error with these morally based anti-racist policies is that they assume that a complicated set of human relations, made up of many strands, including class, gender, age, size and race, can be slotted into a simple white versus black pigeon hole. It is the problem of white versus black which has to be addressed and dealt with. The other things are assumed and not dealt with. This simple model assumes that there is uniform access to power by all whites, and a uniform denial of access and power to all blacks. (Macdonald *et al*, 1989, pp. 347-8)

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The failure of symbolic, moral antiracism

> *No discourse is inherently liberating or oppressive. The liberatory status of any theoretical discourse is a matter of historical inquiry, not theoretical pronouncement.* (Sawicki, 1988, quoted by Gore, 1993, p. 50, original emphasis)

Despite their concern to cut through the tokenistic and obfuscating rhetoric of 'multiculturalism', therefore, antiracists have sometimes been guilty of placing their theoretical commitments before a concern to engage with the complexities of the real world. This is not to say that antiracism has not made important progress. The emphasis on power, for example, is especially crucial. Unfortunately, it is an analysis which adopts a rather simple zero-sum notion of power as a commodity - something to be owned, seized and redistributed. Such a view risks being blinded to the more subtle forms of power in which all participants are implicated and through which even apparently empowering acts might actually reinforce and/or legitimate wider patterns of oppression and exclusion[4]. The failings of moral antiracism are especially clear, and disappointing, when viewed against contemporary events, in education and more generally, in national and international politics. The 1990s have witnessed a resurgence in the importance of race and ethnicity, yet the issues cannot be critically addressed through the simple black/white lens of moral antiracism.

CRITICAL MOMENTS FOR ANTIRACIST THEORY

I opened this paper by looking at some of the ways that race and ethnicity were understood and experienced by young women of minority ethnic background nearing the end of their schooling in an English comprehensive. At this point I want to return the focus to contemporary events, but moving beyond the walls of a single institution, to consider how race and ethnicity figure in (and are (re)constructed through) certain events that have claimed national, and international, attention. There is insufficient space here to launch an exhaustive survey of all relevant events, but a brief note on a few prominent cases will suffice [5].

The Salman Rushdie affair

Much has been written about Rushdie's book, *'The Satanic Verses'*, Muslim responses and Western political, media and intellectual counter-reactions. And yet one fact that rarely gains attention is the grass-roots nature of the initial outcry against the book. Although genuine religious anger may subsequently have been manipulated towards political ends (on a national and international scale), the first deaths linked to the book occurred in apparently spontaneous demonstrations in Islamabad (Pakistan) and Srinigar (India) (Modood, 1992, p. 73). Similarly, the protests in England centred initially around the northern city of Bradford, where the Muslim population is overwhelming of working class background with family origins in poor, often rural, areas of Pakistan (Modood, 1990a). Contrary to the media image of a fundamentalist intellectual-inspired revolt, the Rushdie affair offers a dramatic example of political mobilization around a community's religious - not racial - identity.

This mobilization is all the more significant for the same community's relative lack of political action around issues of colour racism - where African Caribbean groups have traditionally been most prominent (Ramdin, 1987). Tariq Modood has used this example to critique dominant conceptions of antiracism, arguing that while

African Caribbean and white activists have stressed colour racism, it is *'cultural racism'* (based on ethnic - not racial issues) that most affects, and is most deeply felt by, South Asian communities (Modood, 1989; 1990a and b). In fact there is evidence of young South Asian people increasingly mobilizing around antiracist goals inspired by, and drawing strength from, a *combination* of political and religious elements (Samad, 1992; Modood *et al*, 1994).

The 'new' South Africa

South Africa holds a special place in antiracist writing and theory. Until recently South Africa represented the epitome of racist politics in the industrialized world. Here it was easy to see how the black/white worldview could encapsulate a nation's history and point to the crucial issues that lay at the heart of exploitation and oppression within a modern, complex economy. In a society where skin colour alone could define absolutely the limits to any individual's life chances, a racial dualist perspective seems both incisive (cutting through the official rhetoric of 'Coloured', 'Asian' and 'Black') and appropriate (reflecting the true dynamics of power in the state). South Africa, however, was never quite that simple.

Apartheid was a ruthlessly barbaric system, but its place in South African politics cannot solely be understood in terms of colour oppression; its particular form and the generations of argument about its cultural relevance reflect important aspects of Afrikaner ethnicity and folklore. Similarly, South Africa provides strong evidence against the symbolic, moral antiracist belief in the unifying nature of exploitation and the relative unimportance of cultural/ethnic differences. For example, although apparently condemned equally by the racist politics of Apartheid, in the build up to the non-racial elections of April 1994, black supporters of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Inkatha Freedom Party frequently clashed in murderous episodes that reflected years of bitter political and ethnic disputes. In addition, a racial dualist perspective has difficulty accounting convincingly for the support which the National Party (original architects and defenders of Apartheid) enjoyed from the 'Coloured' population of the Cape - for whom race and ethnicity are clearly not the only factors involved in their perception of their own interests and political loyalties (Anderson, 1994, p. 26).

Race, gender and US media circuses

The 1990s have seen two real-life 'soap operas' periodically dominate US TV ratings and cause reverberations throughout American popular culture; first, the Hill/Thomas Senate Hearings of 1991; second, the arrest and trial of OJ Simpson in 1994 and 1995. Both cases concern legal proceedings, beamed live coast-to-coast, where issues of race and racism were deliberately invoked as two prominent African-American men (accused of crimes against women) sought to present *themselves* as race/sex victims.

A good deal of academic work has already been generated around the Senate Hearings which considered the accusations of sexual harassment made by Anita Hill against Judge Clarence Thomas (see, for example, Morrison, 1993). Stuart Hall (1992a) uses the case to illustrate the de-centring of contemporary identities, what he calls 'the post-modern subject' (Hall, 1992a, pp. 277-8). The fractured and dynamic nature of identity is exposed in the range of public and media responses to the hearings where race, gender and class are seen to be cross-cutting, interconnected and unpredictable elements, rather than the final, monolithic certainties of modernist metanarratives:

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> Some blacks supported Thomas on racial grounds; others opposed him on sexual grounds. Black women were divided, depending on whether their 'identities' as blacks or as women prevailed. Black men were also divided, depending on whether their sexism overrode their liberalism. White men were divided, depending, not only on their politics [Thomas was nominated for office by the Republican President George Bush], but on how they identified themselves with respect to racism and sexism. White conservative women supported Thomas, not only on political grounds, but also because of their opposition to feminism. White feminists, often liberal on race, opposed Thomas on sexual grounds... (Hall, 1992a, pp. 279-80)

It is especially important to note how race was used in the hearings. Although both the accused and his accuser were black, Thomas made special use of the history of sexualized racism against African-American men. He referred to the hearings, for example, as a 'high tech lynching for an uppity black', playing on the fact that 'lynching connotes "race" and sex simultaneously, for black men in the United States were often castrated when they were lynched by white people' (Bhavnani with Collins, 1993, p. 500). In a cruel demonstration of the fluid and complex nature of contemporary subjectivities, here a prominent *right wing* member of the judiciary made use of *antiracist* sentiment to deflect a charge of *sexual* harassment:

> Thomas uses the vivid imagery of an antiracist language to silence the feminist discourse on sexual harassment which, in this case, demands a double and displaced articulation of race and gender. (Bhabha, 1993, p. 235).

Although the OJ Simpson case is somewhat different (concerning a charge of double murder), once again race and gender combine in unpredictable but crucial ways. One of Simpson's alleged victims is his ex-wife (a white) whom he is accused of beating throughout their marriage. At the same time that the internationally televised proceedings have elevated 'spousal abuse' in the public eye, so race has also come into play. A professional athlete of near legendary status, Simpson became a major celebrity who seemed, to many, the perfect role model for black youth (reaching superstar status despite a poor background); simultaneously, however, his relationships with white women and previous claims 'to have transcended race' (Katz, 1995, p. 3) have alienated him from some of the very people who might otherwise have been won by claims of police racism (in a state - California - with a notoriously bad record). At the time of writing the trial is still in progress, but the significance of race, and its complex and unpredictable presence in the proceedings (and the national/international news coverage) is assured.

Plastic ethnicity: racism and modernity

The examples above illustrate something of the range and complexity of race and ethnicity. The de-centred subjectivity of postmodern analyses (Hall, 1992a) seems currently to offer the most satisfactory way of interpreting the place of race and racism within these varied events; certainly, the rather one-dimensional perspective of symbolic, moral antiracism is inadequate when faced with the changing, fractured and sometimes contradictory interplay of class, gender, race and ethnicity. By adopting a more fluid, less certain, poststructuralist perspective we can keep sight of race and

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ethnicity as volatile, complex and unpredictable elements that seem increasing to play a central role in contemporary identity politics. Stuart Hall (1992b) uses the phrase 'new ethnicities' to refer to emerging cultural forms of experience and representation acknowledged '(o)nce you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject':

> You can no longer conduct black politics through a strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject. Now, that formulation may seem to threaten the collapse of an entire political world. Alternatively, it may be greeted with extraordinary relief at the passing away of what at one time seemed to be a necessary fiction. Namely, either that all black people are good or indeed that all black people are *the same*. (Hall, 1992b, p. 254, original emphasis)

The view of race, ethnicity and racism that emerges here, is one of *plasticity* - something that can be rigid and enclosing, yet can also be fluid and moulded. Thus, while race and ethnicity continue to be of critical importance, their precise form and interaction with other variables is uncertain, open to change - it is a *plastic ethnicity*[6].

Hence, the young Muslims protesting on the streets of Bradford are no less implicated in the creative politicized reworking of ethnicity than 'Blacks' and 'Coloureds' staking their place(s) in the 'new' South Africa. Similarly, to return to where this paper started, Robina and Nina - young women fighting racism in their school - are no less prone to moulding an ethnicity that their peers (of the same sex, class and ethnic background) are themselves kicking against. Their example, no less than the globally transmitted images of Hill, Thomas and Simpson, points to the other side of ethnicity - the potentially controlling, limiting and claustrophobic plastic bubble of an ethnicity that disciplines the subject: here '*everything* is dangerous ... "liberatory" and "emancipatory" discourses have no guaranteed effects' (Gore, 1993, p. xv, original emphasis).

Antiracism and postmodernism

Faced with such complex and fluid forms, teachers might be forgiven for despairing ever of making a difference in the struggle against racism: this warns against certain dangers in the postmodern turn taken by many social scientists. First, there is the possibility that we will become so mesmerised by diversity and fluidity on the surface that deeper structures of oppression and exclusion will become lost:

> postmodernism has a tendency to democratize the notion of difference in a way that echoes a type of vapid liberal pluralism. There is in this discourse the danger of affirming difference simply as an end in itself without acknowledging how difference is formed, erased, and resuscitated within and despite asymmetrical relations of power. Lost here is any understanding of how difference is forged in both domination and opposition (Giroux, 1991, p. 72).

There is, therefore, the danger that social scientists' fascination with ever more elaborate and impressive theoretical discourses might become an end in itself. As bell hooks notes, there is an additional, and related problem; that despite all the talk of striking up new alliances, social scientists will simply be addressing each other

> It is sadly ironic that the contemporary discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity, the decentred subject, declaring breakthroughs that allow recognition of Otherness, still directs its critical voice primarily to a specialized audience that shares a common language rooted in the very master narratives it claims to challenge. (hooks, 1991, p. 25).

These problems point to an important conclusion; poststructuralist analyses can add to (complement) our understandings of racism by highlighting new and diverse forms of racial exclusion and oppression: but they should not *replace* all previous analyses nor deny the continued existence of simple, crude racism. Some writers risk losing sight of this. Ali Rattansi, for example, argues that the term 'racism' should be restricted to certain forms of *discourse* (1992, p. 36)[7]: he seems to view the term *'racial discrimination'* as a convenient catchall for *actions* that have negative consequences for members of minority ethnic groups. Unfortunately, 'racial discrimination' tends to carry implications of conscious intent and individualizes the analysis, so that discussions of action are placed in a vacuum free from the influence of wider social structural factors. Rattansi assumes a fairly clear-cut distinction between discourse and action. But the dynamics of racism are too complex for such a schema: 'new racist' discourses of the nation (Barker, 1981) can have direct consequences for local discourses of belonging/otherness, and for aggressively racist actions - including racially motivated harassment, and even murder (Back 1993; Centre for Multicultural Education 1993). *Racism operates through petrol bombs, knives and boots, as well as discourse*. For all the creative re-working and negotiation of new ethnicities, old style racist violence is very much alive and well: see figure 1.

Figure 1 about here

Teachers face a situation, therefore, where racial and ethnic identifications are becoming increasingly complex and diverse: the need to address racism (in all its forms) is as urgent as ever. In the next section I examine some of the broader issues arising from a recent study of successful antiracist change in secondary schools - successful inasmuch as the changes moved beyond a rhetorical concern with symbolic, moral forms, to address the lived experiences of students and teachers. The research points to ways in which antiracism might adjust to the complex realities of race and ethnicity in the 1990s.

TOWARDS CRITICAL ANTIRACISM

> racism is an ideology which is continually changing, being challenged, interrupted and reconstructed, and which often appears in contradictory forms. As such, its reproduction in schools, and elsewhere, can be expected to be complex, multifaceted and historically specific. (Rizvi, 1993a, p. 15)

In this section I consider the possibilities for a workable, rigorous and grounded version of school antiracism. The failure of symbolic, moral antiracism highlights the need for a more critical approach; one that recognizes the complex and uncertain interconnections between race/ethnicity and other forms of social division and

exploitation. This approach to antiracism is a more *critical* perspective in at least two senses: first, it can address multiple forms of racism, including the 'new racism' with its emphasis on cultural difference rather than racial superiority. Second, learning the lessons of the Burnage inquiry means adopting a more *self*-critical position: developing an antiracism that is less certain; conscious of the limits to any such approach and the likelihood of making mistakes.

By definition, as we move away from the certainties of symbolic, moral forms of antiracism it becomes impossible to give any simple blueprint for action at the school level. This is no excuse, however, for the reliance on rhetoric and polemic that has characterised much writing in this field. The following characteristics for critical antiracism arise from qualitative research in English secondary schools[8]. The schools were selected for their past achievements in having established antiracism as a major strand in the lives of students and teachers: one was described in a recent inspection report as 'in the forefront of good practice in relation to equal opportunities (race, sex, disability)'. The schools are far from perfect; they are still struggling with a range of issues - not least the impact of massive recent reforms of the state education system. Nevertheless, their experiences, and the insights offered by previous work in this field, suggest certain broad characteristics which may offer a way forward for others struggling with antiracism.

Race/ethnicity is vitally important but not the sole locus of identity, experience or meaning

Race remains a vitally important part of contemporary life and politics, but it is neither separate from other factors (class, gender, sexuality, disability) nor is it always the most important (essential) characteristic in human experience and action. Race may be more/less important to the same person at different times/in different contexts. This means, of course, that racism must be constantly and rigorously investigated, not simply asserted or denied according to some favoured perspective.

In practice, both case study schools went through periods of considerable self-doubt. Indeed, many white teachers began to question their ability ever to act in ways that were not, by some definition, racist. The situation became particularly acute when teachers felt unable to respond to accusations of racism from students. The work of a committed 'core' of teachers, who led the antiracist changes in each school, was especially important in addressing this issue. Together with supportive members of the senior management team, these teachers helped colleagues (informally as friends; formally through inservice activities) to become more confident in addressing issues of racism. As a result, most teachers in the case study schools now resist the common reactions of either (a) denying that they, as teachers, could ever act in racist ways; or (b) being so frightened of the accusation that they become paralysed when racism is raised. Both these positions undermine antiracism and are recognized as hypocritical by students (of all ethnic backgrounds).

There are no angels or devils - just humans

It is vital to break with victim/criminal stereotypes of minority youth. This also means rejecting the angels and devils typologies that (a) regard racism as a 'whites only' preserve, and (b) require the maintenance of fictions about the essential 'goodness' of minority groups, as if they were not subject to the same depth and variation as other people - what Stuart Hall calls 'the end of the essential black subject' (Hall, 1992b, p. 254). By engaging with the variability and complexity of social relations it seems that antiracism *can* build genuine support and involvement across race and class barriers.

The case study schools, for example, have mobilized the support of students and communities from a range of backgrounds - *including the white working class*. This took time, however, and owed much to the schools' recognition that they could not afford to ignore the views of white students. In both schools, for example, white young people complained that the initial moves toward antiracism were biased against them. Most importantly, white students argued that, in practice, antiracism meant teachers would not believe them in any clash with minority peers. In Garret Morgan Comprehensive, for example:

> The feedback we had, as we put together the policy, was that it was all biased towards the Bangladeshi/black students, rather than the white students (...) And this was the feedback we got very strongly from the white kids; this system wasn't for them. And why were we doing this?

Similarly in Seacole Comprehensive:

> There was a big fight (...) about a black girl pushing another one and then the [white] girls say, 'There is nothing we can do or say to defend ourselves, because they know here that if it involves Asians and us... they won't listen to us'.

This raises difficult questions: the teachers were aware of the possibility that by addressing the views of white students, they might somehow dilute their antiracism - 'sell out' for the sake of expediency. On the other hand, the Burnage report is clear in its advocacy of an antiracism that positively engages with all students:

> Since the assumption is that black students are the victims of the immoral behaviour of white students, white students almost inevitably become the 'baddies'. The operation of the [doctrinaire 'moral'] anti-racist policies almost inevitably results in white students (and their parents) feeling 'attacked' and all being seen as 'racist', whether they are ferret-eyed fascists or committed anti-racists or simply children with a great store of human feeling and warmth who are ready to listen and learn and to explore their feelings towards one another. (Macdonald *et al*, 1989, p. 347)

Elsewhere I have examined these issues, and the schools' responses, in greater detail (Gillborn, 1995b), suffice it to say that in the case study schools the 'core' antiracist teachers' explored ways of involving white students and re-evaluating their approaches to antiracism. When explaining the schools' anti-harassment procedures, for example, the teachers argued that, in principle, they could be used by anyone, regardless of their ethnic origin. In practice the procedures on racist harassment continue to be used almost exclusively against white aggression/racism: yet the schools' acceptance of the wider principle (that *'racism and ethnocentrism are not necessarily confined to white groups*' - Rattansi, 1992, p. 36 original emphasis) has avoided 'moralizing' about white power in ways that do not make sense to many white students - especially those from working class backgrounds, for whom talk of their being in a position of power might seem absurd. Although the case study schools have adopted this position mostly out of pragmatism, it echoes important advances in attempts to theorize racism and difference (see, for example, Donald and Rattansi, 1992).

No general theory of antiracism is possible or appropriate

There is no blueprint for successful antiracism - no one 'correct' way. What succeeds at one time, or in one context, may not be appropriate at a later date or in another context. Racism changes; it works differently through different processes and changes with particular institutional contexts. Antiracism must recognize and adapt to this complexity. Common stereotypes of South Asian people, for example, have been radically altered by World events such as the Gulf War and the Rushdie affair. The case study schools not only responded to the immediate effects of these crises, they also face a continuing challenge to adapt positively to the changing landscape of ethnic identifications and conflicts.

Additionally, the education system in England, like many capitalist states, is currently undergoing a period of far reaching reform. The introduction of market principles, an attack on the local state and intensified competition between schools, threaten to undo years of progress in some areas. Many schools are, for example, increasingly turning to selection and hierarchical organisation of teaching as means of improving examination results - details of which are published annually. Such visible gains in examination performance may be at the hidden expense of equity and justice. Previous research suggests that wherever students are selected according to a behavioural/academic standard this is bad news for those interested in equality of opportunity: black students may be marked down because racialized conceptions of order and discipline label them as having a 'bad attitude' (Gillborn, 1990; Wright, 1986) while their South Asian peers may have *language* issues misinterpreted as deep seated *learning* difficulties (CRE, 1992; Troyna and Siraj-Blatchford, 1993)

Antiracism, therefore, is never finished. Both within the school walls and beyond, race and racism are constantly recreated and contested. The case study schools have recognized this in the establishment of permanent staff committees who take responsibility for the day-to-day running of antiracist procedures and monitor all new developments - acting as the antiracist conscious of the school.

The politics of antiracist change

Racism cannot simply be taught or 'reasoned' out of people or systems. Racism is shaped and reconstructed through so many diverse perspectives and agencies that it is ridiculous to imagine that people can simply identify it and leave it at the school gates, in the way they can shed their 'civilian' clothes for a more scholarly uniform. Racism is about power and about self/other definitions. Antiracism, therefore, is likely to challenge existing interests and it is probably naive to expect change via group discussion and self-analysis. In changing institutions like schools it may be necessary to mobilize a range of constituencies, including students, local communities and senior management.

In analysing the antiracist changes in the case study schools I adopted a micropolitical perspective, which acknowledges the power dimensions and conflict inherent in change processes (see Ball, 1987, Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992; Gillborn, 1994). In both schools the antiracist changes were led by a small 'core' group of around six teachers: they took responsibility for seeking out information about antiracism; they invited outside speakers (from local communities, voluntary groups and higher education); they organised inservice events for colleagues; and drafted the first antiracist policies for their schools. The core groups did not involve their headteachers on a frequent basis, but they drew strength from the heads' public support for antiracism. As Fazal Rizvi has noted, school administration is not the

neutral, technical activity that appears in most managerialist accounts (see, for example, Torrington and Weightman, 1989):

> Just as teaching is a classed, raced and gendered activity, so is administration. Administrative work is socially and culturally formed, and is never neutral in the way functionalist theories assume ... (G)ender and race are not issues external to the processes of schooling ...they are *constitutive of* curricular, pedagogic and administrative relations in schools. It is not possible therefore to assume a position of neutrality in the formation of such relations. (Rizvi, 1993b, pp. 214-15)

In both case study schools the heads made their support for antiracism clear. This gave authority to the core groups' work. Additionally, at strategic points, the heads intervened to ensure that the core groups kept sight of the need to involve (rather than intimidate or lecture) their peers. Interestingly, each of the headteachers (and their predecessors) are women. The sample is, of course, too small to add much to the debate about whether male and female heads tend to adopt different styles of leadership (see Ouston 1993; Ozga 1992). As social scientists we should not, perhaps, be surprised if women managers *tend* to adopt rather different styles, since the social construction of gender is likely to have influenced their life and career experiences[9]. The really important issue here is the kind of headship styles adopted, not the heads' sex or whether their styles are typical of one gender or another. It is interesting to note, however, that whereas antiracism is frequently portrayed in aggressive 'macho' terms (see Brandt, 1986; Macdonald *et al*, 1989), the styles of headship that have supported antiracism in the case study schools tended to be relatively 'collegial, open, consultative and team oriented' approaches that, to date, 'are more evident in women's management styles' (Hall, V., 1993, p. 41, after Bolam *et al*, 1993; see also Shakeshaft 1987; 1993).

A micropolitical perspective also reveals the importance of students as active agents in antiracist change. I have already noted the significance of white students views and experiences (see above). More generally, however, antiracism in the case study schools benefited enormously from the support of students. Both core groups found ways of involving students in the initial debates about antiracist policies; this had the unexpected effect of creating a 'buzz' around the schools, as students discussed the issues with their friends and spontaneously raised questions with members of staff. This changed the micropolitical terrain in the school, making it difficult for staff to argue that the policies were unnecessary or would 'stir up trouble' (see Gillborn, 1995b).

CONCLUSIONS

With the increasing tide of racist violence across Europe, and widespread reforms of social policy, the need for antiracism is as great as ever. Yet 'experts' in many fields (including local government, education and industry) have begun to write off antiracism as outdated and ineffectual. This conclusion is premature and dangerous. I have argued that just as racism changes, so must antiracism. Recent advances in theorizing the complex and dynamic nature of identity do not demolish antiracism, they suggest ways in which it can grow and develop: rather than dumping antiracism, we should get better at it.

I began with the views and experiences of students in a multi-ethnic school in England; students who are actively engaged in the creation of 'new ethnicities' (Hall,

1992b). These identities are not given, by community elders nor the mass media, they are creatively negotiated. They reflect diverse influences and are contested - not least by peers of the same sex and ethnicity. Simultaneously, the students reflect the growing importance and complexity of identity politics - a global phenomenon with local ramifications (Hall, 1992a). In this context the simple dualisms of symbolic, moral antiracism are inadequate.

I have suggested the outline for a new *critical antiracism* that acknowledges the complexity of contemporary identity politics and builds on original case study research in schools that have moved beyond rhetoric, to address antiracism as a central and crucial part of the lives of students and teachers. These broad principles do not offer any comfortable or easy solutions, but they do suggest some of the ways that antiracism may have to adapt in order to play its proper role in the future. Perhaps the most heartening finding, to emerge from research in antiracist schools, concerns the dedication and sensitivity of many students (of all ethnic backgrounds). Teachers make mistakes - especially as they struggle to rework practices and assumptions they may never have previously questioned. The students, however, were not only generally supportive of antiracism, they also played an active role in encouraging a more rigorous and workable approach. The students seemed remarkably sensitive to the complexity of situations and were prepared to work with teachers - *if* they were convinced of their sincerity and willingness to apply antiracism to dealings with colleagues and parents, as well as children.

Notes

1 A more detailed account of the school and its recent history is available in Gillborn, 1995a. In reporting the case study material all names have been changed.

2 I want to stress that my comments on municipal & moral antiracism are in no way an attack on *all* antiracist activity - indeed, I want consciously to address how such work might become more effective. *Symbolic, moral* antiracism is currently the most visible and well documented form of 'antiracism' but it is not the only or the paradigmatic version.

3 This definition of racism is very common in antiracist writing and is still adopted in some academic texts. See, for example, Troyna and Hatcher, 1992, pp. 16-17.

4 See, for example, Barry Troyna's concerns about the use of 'empowerment' as a concept in social research (Troyna, 1994).

5 These events deserve (and have received) considerable attention in their own right. My aim here is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of the events, but rather to highlight some of their key features in terms of new and changing notions of identity and ethnicity.

6 Here I am drawing from Anthony Giddens' work on modernity and sexuality. Giddens defines 'plastic sexuality' as 'decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction ... Plastic sexuality can be moulded as a trait of personality and thus intrinsically bound up with the self.' (Giddens, 1992, p. 2).

7 Rattansi defines racism as 'discourses which group human populations into "races" on the basis of some biological signifier - for example, "stock" - with each "race" being regarded as having essential characteristics or a certain essential character (as in the phrase "the British character", or in the attributions to "races" of laziness, rebelliousness, or industriousness) and where inferiorization of some "races" may or may not be present' (Rattansi 1992: 36).

8 *Mary Seacole Comprehensive* is an 11-16 girl's school in a large Midlands city. Around half the 550 students are of South Asian ethnic origin (mostly with family roots in Pakistan and northern India). Around a third of students are white, with roughly 18 per cent of African Caribbean ethnic background. The local area has suffered greatly in the recent recession. The school estimates that three out of four students live in disadvantaged areas; one in two are entitled to free school meals (a welfare benefit).
Garret Morgan Comprehensive is a predominantly white 11-18 school located in a prosperous South East City. Around ten per cent of its 500 students are of Bangladeshi origin - a community that suffers disproportionately high rates of unemployment locally.
For further details on the schools, and the research project, see Gillborn, 1995a.

9 Such a constructivist position also makes space for good headship styles whatever a teacher's gender (it does not embrace an essentialist argument about women's innate abilities).

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February 1991: Rolan Adams, a 15-year-old black grammar school pupil from south London, is stabbed to death by a young neo-Nazi on the Thamesmead estate.

July 1992: Rohit Duggal, a 16-year-old Asian pupil, is stabbed to death during a confrontation with a group of white youths in Greenwich, south London.

April 1993: Black sixth-former Stephen Lawrence, 18, is stabbed to death by half a dozen white youths.

April 1993: 14-year-old black Sheffield boy bayonets Grant Jackson, a 17-year-old white boy, to death during inter-school gang warfare.

May 1993: Two Bengali youths, aged 17, are attacked with a machete by a skinhead as they sit on a wall outside one of their homes in Camden, north London.

September 1993: Quaddus Ali, a 17-year-old Bangladeshi student at Tower Hamlets College, east London, is savagely beaten by a group of white men, including skinheads.

September 1993: At least nine pupils transfer from George Green's School on the Isle of Dogs, Tower Hamlets, because of racial harassment.

February 1994: Muktar Ahmed, 19, savagely beaten by a gang of 20 white youths in Bethnal Green, east London. A few days later, a group of white youths armed with iron bars and accompanied by dogs attack Asian students sitting in a park during their lunch break from Tower Hamlets College. The following day a 14-year-old Bengali boy is stabbed in the face by four white men as he walks down Bethnal Green Road.

March 1994: Violent clashes take place between black and Asian youths, some of them armed, in and around Quintin Kynaston School in St John's Wood, north London.

June 1994: Student Shah Mohammed Ruhul Alam, 17, is critically wounded after being stabbed by 10 white youths.

August 1994: Richard Everitt, a 15-year-old white pupil, is stabbed to death by a group of 11 Asian youths near King's Cross Station, north London.

December 1994: The National Union of Students launches a 24-hour hotline to tackle growing harassment and intimidation of students by far-Right groups.

Figure 1: A brief chronology of racial violence against children and young people in England

source: Adapted from *Times Educational Supplement*, 6 January 1995, p. 9.